



Mid-America Theatre Conference

NEWSLETTER

Volume 16

Number 3

May 1995

Dear Colleagues:

As usual, it is my pleasure to thank everyone who contributed to the success of our 1995 conference in Kansas City. Special thanks to the Co-ordinators: Ron Wainscott and Margaret Knapp for Theatre History; Lin Holder and Paul Siemers for Directing; Jeff Church, Jeanne Klein, and Jed Davis for Theater for Youth; Jon Cantor and Rick Plummer for Auditions; Vice-President George Glenn for serving as Program Chair and coordinator of Production Workshops. Very special thanks to Sarah Blackstone for innaugurating the Young Scholars' Program. Thanks, as always, to Secretary/Treasurer Tom Mitchell and Executive Secretary Glenn Pierce for their invaluable contributions. And my personal gratitude to my graduate students who chauffeured Maria Irene Fornes to and from the K.C. airport (and dealt with the delays and uncertainties posed by misplaced tickets, fog at LaGuardia, etc.): Rodger Smith, Melissa Alpers-Springer, Cindy Gendrich, and Woody Hood.

The times, they are a'changin', and MATC officers change, too. We will miss the services of Glenn Pierce as Executive Secretary. Glenn has been a mainstay of this organization; and certainly, my term as President would have been much more difficult had I not known that I could rely on Glenn for help and advice. I have enjoyed working with the Officers and all of the Symposia Coordinators, as well. Special thanks to my TAs, Matt Bliss and Cindy Gendrich, who have kept up the mailing list and put together the mailings, as well as to our Department Secretary, Jelila Khalil, who typed the newsletters. I welcome our new set of Officers, who take office July 1: President George Glenn, Vice-President Lynn-Steven Johanson, and Secretary/Treasurer Noreen Barnes-McClain.

As another sign of changin' times, I am pleased to announce the membership of the special MATC Task Force, which will consider what changes we need to make in our conference format: Lynn-Steven Johanson (Chair), Dan Watermeier, John Green, Sarah Blackstone, Rick Plummer, Kim Marra, and Stacy Connelly. Lynn-Steven will be contacting Task Force members and hopes to conduct much of the Task Force's business via Internet. Lynn writes: "As far as the MATC Task Force goes, I believe that it is imperative that we place MATC on Internet so it may be accessed by more people and to generate more interest in the various focus groups. A call for papers could reach additional people and make communicating directly with the chairs of each symposium quick and efficient."

Announcements of Symposia topics and coordinators for the 1996 Conference appear in this issue. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us March 14-17, 1996, at the Arlington Park Hilton in Chicago (close to O'Hare). After my six years of service to MATC (as Co-Chair of the Directing Symposium, Vice-President, and then President), I am looking forward to attending the Conference as a simple participant and hope to see you there!

Suzanne Burgoyne, MATC President

MID-AMERICA THEATRE CONFERENCE
ANNUAL MEETING 18 MARCH 1995

President Suzanne Burgoyne called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.. 1994 minutes were approved. Secretary/Treasurer Tom Mitchell passed out a financial report: current assets of \$18,242.94. Based on real and estimated expenses from 1995, the remaining balance for the organization was projected at \$611.73. Bob Schanke announced that the requested support for *Theatre History Studies* will be reduced from \$3500 to \$2000. [The good news is that our financial picture is less dismal than anticipated. Whereas our 1994 hotel bill was \$2000 more than we expected--due to video rental costs--our 1995 bill was \$2000 less than we expected. Our current balance as of this writing is \$5333.72--approximately the same as when the current set of officers took office--S.B.]

Executive Secretary Glenn Pierce reported that the conference registration included 142 members, 166 registrants for auditions, and 12 companies registered to watch auditions (only 9 companies actually attended). Glenn Pierce announced his plan to retire from the position of MATC Executive Director. The assembled members approved with acclamation Suzanne Burgoyne's motion to thank Glenn Pierce for his service to MATC as Executive Director.

Bob Schanke presented the *Theatre History Studies* Annual Report. The journal is now mailed to 31 countries. Book Reviews in *Theatre History Studies* are included in the *Book Review Index*. *Theatre History Studies* may be included in the next edition of *H.W. Wilson's Humanities Index*. Sarah Blackstone announced that the list from her research project (funded by MATC) has been put on disc, as decided at the 1994 annual meeting, and is available at the conference desk.

George Glenn reported for the Nominations Committee: Lynn-Steven Johanson nominated as Vice President/President-Elect and Noreen Barnes-McClain nominated as Secretary/Treasurer. There were no other nominations from the floor. [Since only one person was nominated for each office, it was subsequently decided at the Officers' Meeting that there was no need to hold an election; both nominees could be considered elected by acclamation.]

Suzanne Burgoyne opened the floor for discussion of this year's conference. It was stated that there was a problem with the noise from adjoining rooms interfering with conference sessions. Glenn Pierce stated that the meeting space at the Arlington Hilton in Chicago in 1996 should help to alleviate problems. Suzanne Burgoyne pointed out that the problem has to do with having performances and performers in a hotel which is not designed for those acoustical problems. Glenn Pierce explained the circumstances of the cancellation of accommodations on the Plaza and subsequent arrangement for the Conference at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center. Weldon Durham added that he would not wish the conference to lose performance aspects in order to keep things orderly.

Bob Schanke addressed what he termed a problem in leadership within the conference: a schism between "junior" and "senior" academics. He stated that he feels that more junior members need to begin to assume responsibilities. Glenn Pierce stated that a strength of this conference has been that there is a place for theatre historians, directors, those with interest in Theater for Young Audiences, and those pursuing auditions. Each of these areas needs to generate interest to make the entire conference successful.

Suzanne suggested that there is a need to develop new ideas about how to handle auditions. In the past few years, the conference has seen an unfortunate cycle: one year a decrease in the number of auditions, followed the next year by a decrease in the number of companies. Rick Plummer posed the general question of whether we wanted to continue to sponsor the auditions. He pointed out that the MATC auditions compete with the Midwest Theatre Auditions, which are bigger and earlier. Companies attending this year were disappointed with the number and qualities of auditionees and with the facilities. Plummer suggested that we commit to better marketing of auditions, send a do's and don'ts list to auditionees, that there be a pre-audition meeting with auditionees to go over procedures, that there be more staff to handle auditions. It was brought up that the timing of the MATC auditions is not good; many students have already committed to jobs by the time our auditions come around.

John C. Greene discussed his perception that there is a general lack of a sense of occasion at the conference. He stated that he felt it would be good to encourage the crossing of boundaries between directing/history/production/TYA etc. He went on to say that if this conference is not an appropriate venue for auditions, perhaps it could be a place for students to learn about auditions through workshops, etc.

Suzanne Burgoyne turned the topic of discussion to the 1996 conference. Laurence Senelick and Tracy Davis will chair the Theatre History Symposium. Sarah Blackstone encouraged continuation of the Young Scholars Program and volunteered to continue to coordinate this effort. It was moved and seconded to continue the Young Scholars Program. The motion passed. Lynn-Steven Johanson and Eglia Hassan have agreed to co-chair the Directing Symposium. No chair was named for the Theater for Youth program [Nancy Hovasse and Gretta Berghammer have since agreed to serve in that capacity--S.B.]. Weldon Durham suggested that co-ordinators from the Directing Symposium and Theatre History Symposium develop some crossover programming.

Glenn Pierce raised a question about the advisability of a Banquet and Speaker. Bob Schanke spoke in favor of the banquet event. A discussion followed regarding the ways/means/and rationale for a banquet and speaker. The possibility was raised of chartering a bus to take participants into Chicago for a theatre production in lieu of a banquet and speaker. Tice Miller moved that the President appoint a task force to design a conference for the future (including consideration of a site for the 1997 conference, format of the conference, special events, etc.). Interested MATC members were to sign up on a list from which President Burgoyne would select a committee. Tice Miller offered to host a meeting of this committee at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Suzanne Burgoyne appointed a committee to nominate future MATC Fellows: Julia Curtis (Chair), Judith Zivanovic, and Bob Schanke. Weldon Durham suggested investigating the possibility of buying management services for MATC from the ATHE office in Chicago. Sarah Blackstone will pursue further information on this possibility.

The meeting was adjourned. Respectfully submitted, Tom Mitchell, Secretary/Treasurer

The following are the symposia topics for next year; and, from Theatre History, for 1997:

Theatre History Symposium 1996

"The Unreal Verisimilitude: Cinema and Theatre's First Century of Co-Existence"

In 1893, due to a routing error, Chicago's Columbian Exposition narrowly missed being the first site of a kinetoscope demonstration. Cinema has since become an unavoidable and seminal influence on the Mid-West and the world, emblematic of the role of the machine in making mass culture. Until its "virtual" offspring usurps the live interaction considered a defining element of performance, the projected image and live theatre still co-exist . . . even, at times, productively.

In 1996, the Theatre History symposium marks the centenary of the first motion pictures in vaudeville houses and music halls (1896), and a century of co-existence between cinema and theatre. Proposals are invited on--but are not limited to--the following topics:

- cinema as an outgrowth of theatre's fascination with optical trickery, illusions of motion, projections, peep shows, photography, and any and all technologies of making and viewing, or ways of capturing images and manipulating vision;
- the reciprocal impact of theatrical and cinematic aesthetics anywhere in the world;
- the influence of the cinema industry's epicenters (e.g., Hollywood, Berlin, Bombay) on theatrical activity and cultural production;
- examination of what constitutes "real drama" whether in the sense meant by Belasco (an economic distinction) or the philosophical;
- formative influences on the genres of cinema and their relationship with other cultural categories;
- descriptions of theatre audiences' behavior, viewing, and social identifications, as treated by scholarship: how has spectating become as legitimate a subject of study as other categories of performance;
- adaptations from stage to screen and screen to stage;
- the economics of cinema and the reconfiguration of leisure as an entertainment industry;
- relationships between the apparatus of cinema and theatre, whether from theoretical or technological perspectives;
- questions of performance technique and the transmission of acting traditions from stage to film and back again;
- the transmission of myth through "paradigmatic forms," such as publicity, iconography, gossip, etc.

Proposals should be no longer than two pages. Since papers will be delivered as oral presentations of fifteen to twenty minutes long, speakers should aspire to clarity, concision, and an avoidance of jargon (theoretical or technical) and of obscurity. Proposals must indicate whether the presentation requires audio-visual enhancement (slide projectors, video, film clips). Proposals may be sent to either of the co-chairs. Deadline for proposals: 1 November 1995.

Co-Chairs: Tracy C. Davis, Dept. of Theatre, Northwestern Univ., 1979 Sheridan Rd., Evanston IL 60208-2430;
Laurence Senelick, Dept. of Drama, Leir Hall, Tufts Univ., Medford MA 02155

Young Scholars' Symposium 1996

This is a debut panel, with submission open to any currently-enrolled undergraduate or graduate student who has never presented at a regional or national conference. Twenty-minute papers on any theatre-related topic will be considered. Submissions must be accompanied by a nominating letter from a faculty member at the student's institution.

Send proposals before December 1, 1995 to Sarah J. Blackstone, Dept. of Theatre-6608, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-6608. Note any audio-visual needs.

Directing Symposium 1996

"The Evolving Craft of the Stage Director"

Since the beginning of the modern period, the craft of the stage director has evolved through experimentation with and development of new approaches, strategies, methods, and techniques for directing plays. Changing styles and new philosophies have created challenges, controversies, and innovative solutions, while at the same time, placing new demands on the teaching of directorial skills. As we are about to enter the 21st century, how has the director's craft changed, and where is it heading? The Directing Symposium seeks paper, panel, or workshop proposals addressing some aspect of the evolving craft of the stage director.

Send proposals before December 1, 1995 to the MATC Directing Symposium Co-Chairs: Eglal Hassan and Lynn-Steven Johanson, Department of Theatre, Western Illinois University, Macomb IL 61455 (309-298-1543); FAX 390-298-2695.

Note any audio-visual needs.

Theater for Youth 1996
**"Comparing and Connecting: Interfacing Theater for Youth
with Dramatic and Electronic Media"**

A full description will be published in the October 1995 Newsletter, but the message I received from Gretta (appropriately, via e-mail) indicates that "the title, in part, is based on the new national K-12 fine arts standards in theatre . . . We are hoping to make some strong links to the standards at the Conference." For information, contact one of the Co-ordinators:

Gretta Berghammer, Dept. of Theatre, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls IA 50614 (e-mail Berghammer@uni.edu); Nancy Hovasse, Dept. of Theatre, 4-122 Krannert, 500 S. Goodwin, University of Illinois, Urbana IL 61801 (e-mail hovasse@ux1.cs.uiuc.edu).

Production Workshops 1996

We are seeking workshops which will provide educational experiences for students auditioning at the conference. Workshop length: 1 hour, 15 minutes. Include any audio-visual needs; special items cannot be provided by the conference. Submit a one-page description of the workshop and a one-paragraph description for program copy before December 1, 1995 to Lynn-Steven Johanson, Department of Theatre, Western Illinois University, Macomb IL 61455.

Auditions and Interviews 1996

Co-ordinator: Rick Plummer, Director, INTERACT: Teen-to-Theatre, Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri, 711 N. Providence Rd., Columbia MO 65201 (314) 449-2475.

Theatre History Symposium 1997
"Theatre and Its Audience: What Makes Theatre Popular?"

As Congress works to balance the budget, public funding for the Arts could very well become a thing of the past. As theatre is asked to "pay for itself," it is time that we examine the various ways that audiences might be attracted to theatre productions and ways in which we might make our art more accessible to a wider range of tastes. In 1997, The Theatre History Symposium invites proposals on such topics as: all forms of theatrical popular entertainment, contemporary and historic; the commercial success but critical failure of performers, plays, or theatres (and, of course, vice versa); examination of how we define theatre and what we choose to exclude from this category; the creation of myth and/or national identity through theatrical events; the ways in which audiences receive meaning and the ways in which we project meaning from the stage; the control of plays and productions by authors or other authorities; censorship in its many forms; the economics of the theatre; the impact of violence on audiences, the ethics of production choices for actors and audiences.

For full information on the 1997 Theatre History Symposium, see *Theatre History Studies* or contact: Sarah J. Blackstone, Dept. of Theater-6608, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-6608.

Suzanne Burgoyne, President
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